

Evaluating the Votes and Actions of Public Officials from a Catholic Perspective

“The Christian faith is an integral unity, and thus it is incoherent to isolate some particular element to the detriment of the whole of Catholic doctrine. A political commitment to a single isolated aspect of the Church’s social doctrine does not exhaust one’s responsibility towards the common good.”

–Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life

Every four years since 1976, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Administrative Committee has issued a statement on the responsibilities of Catholics to society. This publication, Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility, includes the following four *Moral Priorities for Public Life*: (1) Protecting human life; (2) Promoting family life; (3) Pursuing social justice; and (4) Practicing global solidarity.

Unfortunately, recent media attention has focused on one or two priorities of the Catholic Church, while obscuring others. This has made it more difficult for Catholic voters to understand and fulfill their moral obligation to participate in the development of public policies addressing the full range of issues that are Catholic priorities for public life.

Although the media focus has been narrow, the USCCB is deeply involved in a wide range of issues. This breadth of political engagement is enumerated in the Legislative Report for the First Session of the 108th Congress published by the USCCB’s Office of Government Liaison. This comprehensive, although not exclusive, list includes 101 legislative provisions that the USCCB supported in 2003. It is divided into the following seven categories: (1) Communications; (2) Domestic Social Development; (3) Education; (4) General Counsel; (5) International Justice and Peace; (6) Migration and Refugee Services; and (7) Pro-Life.

Of course, the Catholic Church does not weight every issue equally; for example, the USCCB has noted that “the defense of human life and dignity is not a narrow cause, but a way of life and a framework for action.” (Faithful Citizenship) At the same time, the USCCB has said, “We hope that voters will examine the position of candidates on the full range of issues, as well as on their personal integrity, philosophy, and performance.” (Faithful Citizenship)

Few resources are available for Catholics to examine the positions of public officials on the broad range of issues of concern to the Catholic Church.

Attached is an analysis, produced by U.S. Senate staff, that attempts to look at this array of issues. It analyzes votes and legislative cosponsorships for the 24 Catholic U.S. Senators regarding 24 issues for which the USCCB has lobbied. The issues are broadly divided into three areas: Domestic Issues; International Issues; and Pro-Life Issues. The scorecard includes a total of 48 votes or actions Senators have taken regarding these 24 issues, 47 of which took place during the 108th Congress (2003-2004), plus the Iraqi War Resolution, which the Senate passed on October 11, 2002. Items were chosen for the second scorecard based on the following three sources:

- (1) The USCCB Legislative Report for the First Session of the 108th Congress. This publication includes 101 legislative provisions that the USCCB supports. For each provision in the USCCB Report, the Office of Government Liaison includes the action the USCCB has taken to demonstrate its support. These actions fall into one of the following categories: Monitoring, Lobbying, Letter, Press Release and Testimony.

Twenty-nine of these provisions are included in the scorecard. The scorecard could not include: the 14 provisions for which the USCCB has only “monitored” the legislation without identifying a specific position; the 40 provisions that were included in broader legislation but not considered separately, so that the Senators’ positions cannot be deduced; the 11 provisions that the Senate passed by unanimous consent or voice vote, such that the positions of individual Senators cannot be ascertained; and the 7 House bills that do not have Senate companions.

Some examples of provisions for which the USCCB has lobbied but a specific Senate action could not be identified are: full funding for the WIC nutrition program; education vouchers for low-income children in Washington, DC; refugee assistance; debt relief; the Clean Diamond Trade Act; and easing sales restrictions on agricultural and medical supplies to Cuba.

- (2) The USCCB publication Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility. Although this publication does not reference legislation, it was possible to identify several bills and votes that address specific issues in this guide, such as support for nuclear non-proliferation and a worker’s right to unionize and opposition to the death penalty.
- (3) Action Alerts posted on the USCCB website (www.usccb.org). The USCCB sometimes sends “Action Alerts” to Catholics regarding various issues. These Action Alerts often identify the USCCB position on a bill or amendment and request that the recipients of the alert take a specific action, such as urging Senators to support the USCCB position.

This is only an example of how one might consider the broad range of issues supported by the Catholic Church. It is not endorsed by the USCCB and does not speak for the Church. But it does show that simplistic representations of the Church’s role in public life have obscured the wide spectrum of concerns in which the Church is engaged.

None of us can expect to measure up perfectly against the Church’s full agenda of political engagement. What Catholic politicians can hope to see, however, is an attempt to evaluate their work comprehensively, not on the basis of only a narrow slice of the Church’s teachings.

Summary of Catholic U.S. Senators' Support for Issues of Importance to the USCCB

<i>Senator</i>	<i>Overall Score</i>	<i>Domestic Score</i>	<i>International Score</i>	<i>Pro-Life Score</i>
Kerry	60.9%	95%	50%	11%
Durbin	60.5%	91%	77%	8%
Kennedy	60.4%	83%	100%	4%
Leahy	59.7%	82%	80%	17%
Mikulski	54.9%	83%	80%	0%
Murray	54.2%	79%	80%	4%
DeWine	53.8%	39%	26%	92%
Landrieu	52.9%	62%	51%	42%
Dodd	52.8%	88%	53%	4%
Reed	52.2%	85%	64%	0%
Fitzgerald	51.3%	36%	20%	88%
Brownback	51.2%	27%	46%	88%
Biden	50.0%	79%	40%	17%
Cantwell	50.0%	79%	60%	4%
Voinovich	48.3%	51%	19%	63%
Daschle	48.0%	70%	37%	25%
Breaux	47.4%	55%	48%	38%
Harkin	45.8%	76%	53%	0%
Bunning	42.9%	27%	6%	88%
Santorum	40.8%	23%	6%	88%
Murkowski	38.0%	33%	7%	60%
Collins	36.8%	51%	18%	29%
Domenici	34.4%	27%	12%	62%
Sununu	33.2%	23%	9%	63%

Domestic Issues of Importance to the USCCB

For each issue, Senators who supported the USCCB position receive a score of 1; those who opposed receive a score of 0. If multiple votes or cosponsorships were possible, Senators receive a score on that issue that reflects their fractional support, equally weighing each vote or cosponsorship within the issue.

Republican Catholic Senators

	<i>Media Ownership¹</i>	<i>Gun Control²</i>	<i>Mercury Exposure Reduction³</i>	<i>State Medicaid Relief⁴</i>	<i>CARE Act⁵</i>	<i>Expand Child Tax Credit⁶</i>	<i>IDEA⁷</i>	<i>Housing⁸</i>	<i>UI⁹</i>	<i>Increase Minimum Wage¹⁰</i>	<i>Right to Unionize¹¹</i>	<i>Domestic Score</i>	<i>Overall Score</i> (Domestic, Int'l, and Pro-Life)
<i>Number of Votes/Actions</i>	3	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	7	1	1		
Brownback	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	27%	51%
Bunning	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	27%	43%
Collins	.67	.5	1	1	1	0	1	0	.43	0	0	51%	37%
DeWine	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	.29	0	0	39%	54%
Domenici	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	27%	34%
Fitzgerald	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	36%	51%
Murkowski	.33	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	.29	0	0	33%	38%
Santorum	0	0	0	.5	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	23%	41%
Sununu	0	0	0	.5	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	23%	33%
Voinovich	.33	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	.29	0	0	51%	48%
<i>Average Score</i>	.13	.35	.2	.9	1	0	1	0	.13	0	0	34%	43%

Democratic Catholic Senators

	<i>Media Ownership</i>	<i>Gun Control</i>	<i>Mercury Exposure Reduction</i>	<i>State Medicaid Relief</i>	<i>CARE Act</i>	<i>Expand Child Tax Credit</i>	<i>IDEA</i>	<i>Housing</i>	<i>UI</i>	<i>Increase Minimum Wage</i>	<i>Right to Unionize</i>	<i>Domestic Score</i>	<i>Overall Score</i> (Domestic, Int'l, and Pro-Life)
<i>Number of Votes/Actions</i>	3	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	7	1	1		
Biden	.67	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	79%	50%
Breaux	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	55%	47%
Cantwell	.67	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	79%	50%
Daschle	.67	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	70%	48%
Dodd	.67	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	88%	53%
Durbin	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	91%	61%
Harkin	.33	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1 (1 NV)	1	1	76%	46%
Kennedy	.67	1	0	1	1	1	1	.5	1	1	1	83%	60%
Kerry	.5 (1 NV)	1	1	1	1	1 (1 NV)	NV	1	1 (4 NV)	1	1	95%	61%
Landrieu	.33	.5	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	62%	53%
Leahy	.5 (1 NV)	1	1	1	1	1	0	.5	1	1	1	82%	60%
Mikulski	.67	1	0	1	1	1	1	.5	1	1	1	83%	55%
Murray	.67	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	79%	54%
Reed	.33	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	85%	52%
Average Score	.55	.96	.21	1	1	1	.92	.32	1	.93	.79	79%	54%

¹ The USCCB supports regulation to limit the concentration of control over the media. This column includes the vote on a Dorgan Joint Resolution, disapproving the rule submitted by the Federal Communications Commission with respect to broadcast media ownership, which passed 55-40, and co-sponsorship of two bills for which the USCCB has lobbied: the Feingold Competition in Radio and Concert Industries Act and the Stevens Preservation of Localism, Program Diversity, and Competition in Television Broadcast Service Act. Sen. Bunning was a cosponsor of the Stevens bill, but later withdrew his co-sponsorship.

² The USCCB sent a letter in support of the Feinstein Assault Weapons Ban Reauthorization Act and has lobbied in support of the McCain-Reed Gun Show Loophole Closing Act. This column includes votes on these two amendments. The Feinstein amendment passed 52-47, and the McCain-Reed amendment passed 53-46.

³ The USCCB sent a letter in support of the Collins Mercury Reduction Act to limit the use of mercury fever thermometers and improving the collection and proper management of mercury.

⁴ The USCCB sent an “Action Alert” regarding the provision of state Medicaid relief. This column includes a Rockefeller Sense of the Senate Resolution and a Collins amendment to provide \$20 billion in state fiscal relief, half of which would be dedicated to Medicaid. The Rockefeller resolution passed 80-19, and the Collins amendment passed 95-3.

⁵ The USCCB sent several letters and “Action Alerts” in support of the Grassley Charity Aid, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Act. The USCCB supports the increase in funding for the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG); the incentives for charitable giving, including the tax deduction for non-itemizers; and funding for a Compassion Capital Fund to provide technical assistance and capacity building for small charities. The CARE Act passed by a vote of 95-5.

⁶ In 2003, the USCCB sent three “Action Alerts” regarding the need to expand the refundable child tax credit. Sen. Lincoln offered an amendment regarding this tax credit to President Bush’s 2003 tax cut, but it failed 49-51. A motion to proceed to a Lincoln-Snowe bill to restore the advanced refundability of the child tax credit (which would have aided the low-income families who were left out of the tax cut) failed 45-51. Although Sen. Voinovich is a cosponsor of the Lincoln-Snowe child tax credit bill, he voted against the motion to proceed.

⁷ The USCCB sent an “Action Alert” supporting the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This Gregg-Kennedy bill passed by a vote of 95-3.

⁸ The USCCB believes that housing is a basic human right. The USCCB supports the Kerry National Affordable Housing Trust Fund Act to establish a trust fund to provide for the development of decent, safe, and affordable housing for low-income families. The USCCB also supports the Sarbanes Predatory Lending Consumer Protection Act to prohibit the denial of reasonable credit to poor and low-income people.

⁹ The USCCB has sent several letters and “Action Alerts” calling for the extension of the temporary federal unemployment insurance benefit program and for unemployment benefits for long-term unemployed workers who have exhausted all of their state and federal benefits. This column includes five roll call votes to expand unemployment insurance benefits to exhausters and two roll call votes to reinstate the temporary federal unemployment insurance program, which expired at the end of 2003.

¹⁰ Since 2002, the USCCB has sent three “Action Alerts” urging an increase in the minimum wage. The Chairman of the USCCB Domestic Policy Committee also sent a letter to Congress supporting an increase. Sen. Daschle has introduced legislation to achieve this goal.

¹¹ In 1986, the USCCB issued the pastoral letter Economic Justice for All, which stated, “All people have the right to...organize and join unions or other associations.” This principle has been reaffirmed in the USCCB’s current publication Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility. Sen. Kennedy has introduced legislation that would protect employees’ right to choose a union in their workplace, free from coercion by their employers. This includes a card check provision and first contract mediation and arbitration.

International Issues of Importance to the USCCB

For each issue, Senators who supported the USCCB position receive a score of 1; those who opposed receive a score of 0. If multiple votes or cosponsorships were possible, Senators receive a score on that issue that reflects their fractional support, equally weighing each vote or cosponsorship within the issue.

Republican Catholic Senators

	<i>Iraqi War Resolution¹</i>	<i>Block Low-Yield Nukes?²</i>	<i>Global AIDS Funding³</i>	<i>Immigration⁴</i>	<i>North Korean Asylum Seekers⁵</i>	<i>International Score</i>	<i>Overall Score</i> (Domestic, International, and Pro-Life)
<i>Number of Votes/Actions</i>	1	1	7	3	1		
Brownback	0	0	.29	1	1	46%	51%
Bunning	0	0	.29	0	0	6%	43%
Collins	0	0	.57	.33	0	18%	37%
DeWine	0	0	.29	1	0	26%	54%
Domenici	0	0	.25 (3 NV)	.33	0	12%	34%
Fitzgerald	0	No Vote	.14	.67	0	20%	51%
Murkowski	Not in Senate	0	.29	0	0	7%	38%
Santorum	0	0	.29	0	0	6%	41%
Sununu	0	0	.14	.33	0	9%	33%
Voinovich	0	0	.29	.67	0	19%	48%
<i>Average Score</i>	0	0	.28	.43	.1	16%	43%

Democratic Catholic Senators

	<i>Iraqi War Resolution</i>	<i>Block Low-Yield Nukes?</i>	<i>Global AIDS Funding</i>	<i>Immigration</i>	<i>North Korean Asylum Seekers</i>	<i>International Score</i>	<i>Overall Score</i> (Domestic, International, and Pro-Life)
<i>Number of Votes/Actions</i>	1	1	7	3	1		
Biden	0	1	.67 (1 NV)	.33	0	40%	50%
Breaux	0	1	.71	.67	0	48%	47%
Cantwell	0	1	1	1	0	60%	50%
Daschle	0	1	.86	0	0	37%	48%
Dodd	0	1	1	.67	0	53%	53%
Durbin	1	1	.86	1	0	77%	61%
Harkin	0	1	1	.67	0	53%	46%
Kennedy	1	1	1	1	1	100%	60%
Kerry	0	No Vote	1 (5 NV)	1	0	50%	61%
Landrieu	0	1	.86	.67	0	51%	53%
Leahy	1	1	1	1	0	80%	60%
Mikulski	1	1	1	1	0	80%	55%
Murray	1	1	1	1	0	80%	54%
Reed	1	1	.86	.33	0	64%	52%
<i>Average Score</i>	.43	1	.92	.74	.07	63%	54%

¹ Pope John Paul said that “war is always a defeat for humanity” and that Christians are called to be “sentinels of peace.” In early 2003, the Holy See urged all leaders to step back from the brink of war and to continue to work through the United Nations to contain, deter and disarm Iraq. In September 2002, the President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) sent a letter to President Bush, expressing serious concerns regarding the moral legitimacy of any preemptive, unilateral use of military force to overthrow the government of Iraq. The USCCB also sent two “Action Alerts” in late 2002 and several statements urging the pursuit of alternatives to war with Iraq. The Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 passed by a vote of 77-23.

² The Chairman of the USCCB International Policy Committee sent a letter to all Senators, opposing funding for advanced nuclear weapons concepts, including efforts to develop low-yield weapons and the robust nuclear earth penetrator. Sen. Feinstein offered an amendment to the Energy and Water Appropriations bill that would have struck this funding, but it failed 41-53.

³ In 2003, the USCCB issued two “Action Alerts” and sent several letters to Congress, urging it to appropriate \$3 billion to combat global AIDS. There were seven roll call votes in 2003 regarding funding to combat global AIDS; Senators with a score of 29% in favor of global AIDS funding voted in support of the Bingaman Sense of Congress Resolution, which passed 78-18, and the DeWine-Durbin amendment to increase funding to the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act, which passed 89-1.

⁴ This column identifies co-sponsorship of three bills that the USCCB has been actively promoting through letters and “Action Alerts”: the Feinstein Unaccompanied Alien Child Protection Act, the Hatch-Durbin DREAM Act, and the Craig Agricultural Jobs bill.

⁵ The USCCB supports the Brownback-Kennedy bill to allow North Korean nationals to apply for refugee status or asylum.

Pro-Life Issues of Importance to the USCCB

For each issue, Senators who supported the USCCB position receive a score of 1; those who opposed receive a score of 0. If multiple votes or cosponsorships were possible, Senators receive a score on that issue that reflects their fractional support, equally weighing each vote or cosponsorship within the issue.

Republican Catholic Senators

	<i>Partial-Birth Abortion Ban¹</i>	<i>Parental Notification of Abortion²</i>	<i>Abortion Funding³</i>	<i>Abortion Conscience Clause⁴</i>	<i>Emphasize Abstinence to Fight Global AIDS⁵</i>	<i>Human Cloning Prohibition⁶</i>	<i>Unborn Victims of Violence⁷</i>	<i>Death Penalty⁸</i>	<i>Pro- Life Score</i>	<i>Overall Score</i> (Domestic, Int'l, and Pro-Life)
<i>Number of Votes/Actions</i>	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	3		
Brownback	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	88%	51%
Bunning	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	88%	43%
Collins	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	.33	29%	37%
DeWine	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	.33	92%	54%
Domenici	1	0	1	0	No Vote	1	1	.33	62%	34%
Fitzgerald	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	88%	51%
Murkowski	1	0	.5	0	1	1	1	.33	60%	38%
Santorum	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	88%	41%
Sununu	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	63%	33%
Voinovich	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	63%	48%
<i>Average Score</i>	.9	.5	.85	.6	1	.8	1	.13	72%	43%

Democratic Catholic Senators

	<i>Partial-Birth Abortion Ban</i>	<i>Parental Notification of Abortion</i>	<i>Abortion Funding</i>	<i>Abortion Conscience Clause</i>	<i>Emphasize Abstinence to Fight Global AIDS</i>	<i>Human Cloning Prohibition</i>	<i>Unborn Victims of Violence</i>	<i>Death Penalty</i>	<i>Pro- Life Score</i>	<i>Overall Score</i> (Domestic, Int'l, and Pro-Life)
<i>Number of Votes/Actions</i>	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	3		
Biden	1 (1 NV)	0	0	0	0	0	0	.33	17%	50%
Breaux	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	38%	47%
Cantwell	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.33	4%	50%
Daschle	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	25%	48%
Dodd	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.33	4%	53%
Durbin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.67	8%	61%
Harkin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	46%
Kennedy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.33	4%	60%
Kerry	0 (1 NV)	0	2 NV	0	NV	0	0	.67	11%	61%
Landrieu	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	.33	42%	53%
Leahy	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	.33	17%	60%
Mikulski	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	55%
Murray	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.33	4%	54%
Reed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	52%
<i>Average Score</i>	.36	0	.08	0	0	.07	.21	.26	12%	54%

¹ The Chairman of the USCCB Committee for Pro-Life Activities sent several letters in support of the Santorum Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act. This bill passed 64-33, and the Conference Report for this legislation passed 64-34.

² The USCCB has lobbied for the Ensign Child Custody Protection Act to prohibit the transport of minors across state lines to avoid state laws requiring the involvement of parents in the abortion decision.

³ The USCCB sent letters and lobbied against two amendments regarding abortion funding. A Murray-Snowe amendment to overturn the current policy restricting the use of Department of Defense medical facilities to perform abortions failed 48-51. A motion to table a Boxer amendment to overturn the “Mexico City Policy,” which bars provision of population control funds to foreign nongovernmental organizations that promote or perform abortions as a method of family planning, failed 43-53; the Boxer amendment then was adopted by voice vote.

⁴ The USCCB has sent a letter and issued several statements of support for the Gregg Abortion Non-Discrimination Act to prohibit governmental discrimination against health care providers who decline to be involved in abortion.

⁵ The USCCB supported a House of Representatives amendment to the United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2003 to require that at least 33% of HIV/AIDS prevention funds be expended for abstinence-until-marriage programs. During the Senate consideration of this bill, a Feinstein amendment to strike that earmark failed 45-52.

⁶ The USCCB has sent letters and testified before the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Subcommittee on Science, Technology and Space in support of the Brownback Human Cloning Prohibition Act.

⁷ The Chairman of the USCCB Committee for Pro-Life Activities sent several letters in support of the DeWine Unborn Victims of Violence Act. This bill passed 61-38.

⁸ For more than 30 years, the USCCB has called for an end to the death penalty in the United States. This column includes co-sponsorship of the three bills that the USCCB has endorsed: the Feingold Death Penalty Abolition Act; the Feingold National Death Penalty Moratorium Act; and the Hatch-Leahy Advancing Justice through DNA Technology Act, which includes the Innocence Protection Act. The USCCB has endorsed the Innocence Protection Act because it would lead to the exoneration of innocent people and would expose flaws in the administration of the death penalty, thereby encouraging more discussion and debate about the issue. Senators with a score of 33% in this column are cosponsors of the Hatch-Leahy bill.